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extract from

100 Most Dangerous Things on the Planet

written by

Anna Claybourne

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CROCODILE AND ALLIGATOR



Crocodiles and alligators are big, dangerous water reptiles with sharp teeth and strong jaws. They live in rivers, lakes, swamps, estuaries, and sometimes even in the sea. Crocodiles, found around the world, have more pointed snouts, while alligators, found mostly in the USA, have wide snouts. Both are dangerous, and they behave in similar ways.

DANGER RATING

RISK RATING: ☠ ☠ ☠
Most crocodiles and alligators prefer other foods to humans, but attacks still happen regularly.

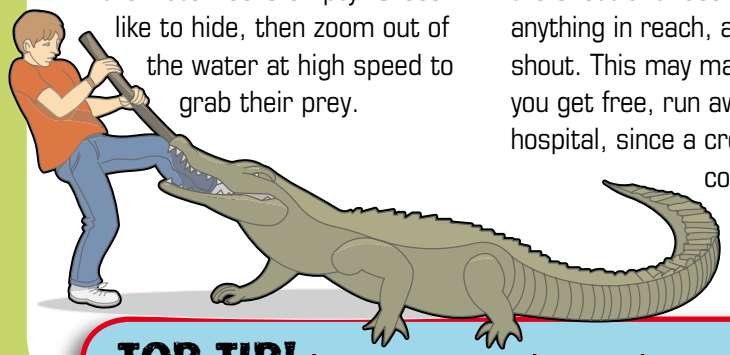
SURVIVAL RATING: 25%
If a croc or alligator actually attacks you, you'll need luck and courage to get away.

WHAT TO DO

KNOW THE DANGERS:
In an area that has crocodiles or alligators, don't hang around near water. Don't paddle, swim, dangle your feet, or sit on the bank, even if the water looks empty. Crocs like to hide, then zoom out of the water at high speed to grab their prey.

IF YOU SEE A CROC OR ALLIGATOR:
If you're in the water, get out at once and move away. Crocs can swim faster than you. On land, run away fast. If a crocodile or alligator runs after you, keep running as fast as you can, as it will soon get tired.

IF IT CATCHES YOU:
Repeatedly punch the crocodile on the snout and face or hit it with anything in reach, and scream and shout. This may make it let go. If you get free, run away and go to a hospital, since a croc's mouth contains harmful disease germs.



TOP TIP! In cartoons, people sometimes try to wedge a croc's mouth open with a stick. Do not attempt this – crocodiles and alligators have incredibly powerful jaws and you won't succeed. A punch on the nose will work better.

KOMODO DRAGON

Dragons don't really exist – the Komodo dragon is actually a type of lizard. In fact, it's the biggest lizard in the world, growing up to 3 metres (10 feet) long. Komodo dragons live on only a few islands in Indonesia. They hunt large animals such as deer and also feed on carrion, or dead meat. They have a powerful bite that injects their prey with lethal disease bacteria. The bacteria can cause death in about two days. The dragon then comes back to feast on the dead animal.

DANGER RATING

RISK RATING: ☠
Komodo dragons are very rare, so you are not at great risk.

SURVIVAL RATING: 95%
Though they can be deadly, Komodo dragons don't often kill people.

DID YOU KNOW?

If a Komodo dragon is in danger, it can suddenly vomit up its last meal. This reduces its body weight, allowing it to run away more easily.

WHAT TO DO

IF YOU SEE A KOMODO DRAGON:
If you do see one, it will probably be at a zoo or wildlife reserve. Sometimes dragons that are kept illegally, as pets, escape – if you see one on the loose, take shelter indoors and call the police.

ON A TOURIST TRIP:
Tourists are taken on guided tours to see Komodo dragons in the wild. On a trip like this, always stay quiet and calm, and follow your guide's instructions.

IF A KOMODO DRAGON ATTACKS:
As with crocodiles and alligators, try to hit the dragon's nose and head to make it let go. Run away and have any bites treated in a hospital to kill the deadly bacteria.



If you see a Komodo in the wild, never try to feed or touch it.

FUNNEL-WEB SPIDER

DANGER RATING

RISK RATING: ☠☠
Though people fear the funnel-web, bites are not common.

SURVIVAL RATING: 95%
Funnel-webs have killed only a handful of people, and there is now an effective antivenom.

The funnel-web spider is found in Australia, and it's one of the most poisonous spiders in the world. There are several species, the most dangerous being the Sydney funnel-web. Most bites happen in late summer, when male spiders are wandering around in search of a female to mate with. They may roam into a house or garage or get trapped in a shed.

WHAT TO DO

BE ON YOUR GUARD:
In eastern Australia, keep a lookout for funnel-web spiders, especially when gardening, hiking, or camping. Learn what the spiders and their webs look like so you'll know what to avoid.

IF YOU ARE BITTEN:
A funnel-web spider bite hurts! You may start to feel sick, dizzy, or tingly. Get to a hospital at once. Keep the bitten body part still. Try to wrap it in a bandage above the bite, and use a splint (a stiff stick) to stop it from moving. For example, for a bite on the hand, wrap the bandage around the arm, starting at the bite and working up to the shoulder. Then tie the splint to hold it straight. If you can, collect the spider safely and take it with you to be identified.



TOP TIP! Always check inside any boots, watering cans, containers, or clothing that has been left outdoors, before you use them. A spider could be hiding inside.



The male Sydney funnel-web spider measures about 3 cm (1.5 in) long, not including its legs.

BLACK WIDOW SPIDER

DANGER RATING

RISK RATING: ☠☠☠
Black widow spiders are common and widespread.

SURVIVAL RATING: 95%
Most black widow bites are not fatal.

Black widow spiders have very poisonous venom. But these are small spiders, with a body length of about 1.5 centimetres (0.6 inches), and they cannot inject much venom at once.

Black widows are found in warm countries around the world. They can be killers, but in most cases being bitten by a black widow is unpleasant rather than deadly. Females are much more dangerous than males. Bites usually happen when people disturb black widow webs in woods, garages, or gardens at night, when the spiders are active.



Most species of black widows are black. Females have hourglass-shaped markings or spots.

WHAT TO DO

SPIDER SENSE:
Black widows come out at night, so avoid stumbling around the garage, garden, or shed in the dark. If you see a black widow, keep your distance and give it time to scuttle away.

IF YOU ARE BITTEN:
Some people do not react much at all to black widow bites, but in most cases the bite will be painful. You should be able to see two tiny fang marks. The poison can cause muscle cramps throughout the body, stomach pain, and vomiting. If you have these symptoms, or think you have been bitten by a black widow, it's always best go to a hospital, even though you may not need antivenom. You can also treat the bite by pressing on it with ice wrapped in a cloth.